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SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION: NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

¶1. SUMMARY: Independent English-language weekly Newsfront (with circulation of 5,000), edited by a well known journalist in Nepal, published an OP-ED piece titled "Nobel peace prize for Koirala: Obama got it, why shouldn't he?" in its January 4-10, 2010 issue. The piece, written by a Nepali scholar studying at Oxford University in the UK, ridiculed the Nepal government's nomination of former Nepali Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala for the Nobel Peace Prize. Comparing the nomination with President Obama's winning of the Prize, the piece implied that if it can go to one "wrong" person then it can go to another "wrong" person as well.

EXCERPTS:

¶2. "Analysts forget the reality that the peace process [of Nepal] is slowly metamorphosing into a 'war process.' At least you should pray that the aged leader will be able to die in peace, and with peace. Stockholm should not deprive him of a piece of peace."

¶3. "I don't know about the others, but I'm really hopeful, not least because the Nobel Prize appears to be decided by a highly capable and thoughtful panel. They did a wonderful job of offering President Obama the Peace Prize without waiting to see if he would deliver on his promise to make the world a more peaceful place to live in. Who knew he would be accepting his prize in Stockholm for his "slight achievements" days after taking a decision to escalate the Afghanistan conflict, borne out of US invasion, by committing extra 30,000 troops? Perhaps he might not have taken this step if he had not received the award? After all the prize is set up under the name of the person who discovered dynamite. Who says the peace prize should not go for someone promoting violence and warfare?"

¶4. "One of the difficulties the Nobel Committee is likely to face while considering Koirala is that they may hardly know anything about Nepal and Nepal's peace process. The first thing they are likely to do is check the BBC Timeline, which alone may not be enough to reach a unanimous decision, even by their standards. Nepal hardly matters to the world powers and therefore the western media does not care a tad bit about what goes on there. So it might be quite challenging for them to defend their support for Koirala before the largely-ignorant world audience."

15. "To overcome this problem, why don't they visit Nepal? I am pretty certain all politicians will support the nomination. The Maoists will also support it as the Prize will give them the international exposure which they have been craving for long. However, the Committee delegates should not make the mistake of talking to two sections - India and members of the public. The former is furious that Gandhi was not awarded, and will insist that Koirala is nowhere near Gandhi. They will also claim that it was not Koirala but India that brokered the peace deal in the first place. On the other hand, people on the streets are furious that they cannot live in peace despite the much-hyped shanti prakriya [peace process] which is increasingly looking shanty. They are likely to shout - "how can Koirala have a peace prize when nobody in the country enjoys peace?"

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